

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

NFAC-033-78

National Intelligence Officers

5 JAN 1978  
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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
FROM: Director, National Foreign Assessment Center  
SUBJECT: Unclassified Study of Soviet Civil Defense

1. Action Requested: That you decide on whether to release the attached unclassified study of Soviet civil defense and on the method of making public the study or its contents.

2. Background:

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a. [ ] requested a sanitized version of the Key Findings and Summary and Conclusions of the recent Interagency Intelligence Memorandum on Soviet civil defense to determine the feasibility of preparing an unclassified paper on the subject. His recommendation in favor of release is attached (Attachment 1).

b. We have taken another look at the substance and style of the unclassified study and have included some further changes. We have modified some sentences which might convey a much different meaning than intended if quoted out of context by those trying purposely to distort the findings of the paper. We have determined that the public release of our proposed draft (Attachment 2) would not reveal sensitive sources or methods. We also propose that an unclassified bibliography be released as part of the study. The bibliography will help protect sources and methods and provide an unclassified data base for those interested.

c. If the attached paper were released it would be the first unclassified DCI publication on a subject specifically related to Soviet capabilities for strategic nuclear conflict. Since the release would set a precedent we recommend that you consider the pros and cons of whether to release the paper and the means of release.

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d. Release of the unclassified study.

Pros

--Would be an official and professional contribution to an issue on which discussion has tended to become polemical.

--Issuance of our own judgments, including necessary caveats might preclude or offset the effect of biased releases of portions of the IIM by others. (Information drawn from the classified IIM on Soviet civil defense or interpretations and comments about its conclusions are likely to find their way into the news media shortly after the document is disseminated.)

--Might reduce incentives to leak parts of the classified IIM, thus reducing the risks of compromising sources and methods.

--Would be responsive to some Congressional requests. (Senator John C. Culver (D., Iowa), Chairman, Subcommittee on General Legislation, Senate Armed Services Committee, has a deep interest in Soviet civil defense and has asked on a number of occasions if we could declassify our Soviet civil defense study.)

Cons

--Possibility of distortion of intelligence findings in spite of caveats, by what the press picks out as headline material (e.g., 2 billion dollars annually and 20 million casualties).

--Possibility of distortion because civil defense treated out of context with overall strategic balance.

--Need to put civil defense in context or perhaps the precedent of release itself, could have snowballing effect of demand on the DCI for more and more comprehensive and sensitive assessments on, say, the overall strategic balance.

--Could inject the DCI into a public debate about an issue rather than through policymaking officials of the Administration or Congressional officials. The DCI could be seen as (1) an

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independent source of public release on foreign developments requiring policy reactions by the Administration, or (2) a source of public release on foreign developments supporting Administration policy.

e. Possible Soviet reactions and response to the release:

--The basic question in the Soviet mind would be why the US government published an assessment of effects of a nuclear attack at a time when the US and USSR appear to be progressing toward a SALT agreement. The Soviet leaders would interpret the decision to publish an unclassified analysis of Soviet civil defense programs in terms of US foreign military and negotiating policy rather than of CIA's effort to educate the public, the Congress and executive branch agencies. Soviet political writers would be more impressed by the fact of the publication than by the accuracy of the information. The Soviet press would probably characterize publication of the paper as a victory for "anti-Soviet" forces and opponents of SALT in the US.

--Although the effect of the publication on SALT itself is harder to foresee, the report would probably have at most a marginally harmful effect on present negotiations. It might cause the Soviets to hesitate more than otherwise about expanding US-USSR negotiations to include civil defense. Soviet leaders would almost certainly believe that the CIA publication represented an effort to stake out a public position on major US concerns in advance of working group discussions on civil defense. This consideration, given the apparent Soviet belief that the USSR leads the US in civil defense, may reinforce any current Soviet hesitation about the value to the USSR of civil defense negotiations.

--On the other hand the Soviets conceivably could be encouraged to enter civil defense negotiations by the belief that the CIA paper (like recent OSD statements about US ASAT development) may presage a major US civil defense effort. This is unlikely, however, because the Soviets would probably conclude that stepping up the US civil defense effort, in view of the US experience with civil defense in the 1960s, would meet political resistance. Soviet propaganda about the CIA report would seek to contribute to such resistance, and to portray the report as an exaggeration by CIA "cold-warriors."

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f. Some of the disadvantages of making the study public might be lessened or eliminated if the study were not released directly to the public media by the DCI. Some other options:

--Provide the unclassified study to a Congressional committee for release by the Congress. An indirect release of a DCI assessment under this procedure would be responsive to Congressional requests and would avoid setting a precedent for the direct release to news media of DCI assessments on Soviet strategic capabilities. The release would not, however, be under the control of Administration officials for whom the IIM on Soviet civil defense was prepared.

--Provide the unclassified study to the Secretary of Defense for release in summary form in the unclassified version of his Annual Defense Department Report. In this case the release would be made by a policymaking official of the Administration, but the findings of the study in summary form would be much more subject to misinterpretation than the complete study. Moreover, the findings might be subjected to a Department of Defense interpretation different than what we intended.

3. Staff Coordination: This memorandum has been coordinated with the DD/NFAC, DDO, D/OSR, NIO/SP, NIO/USSR, Legislative Counsel, Assistant for Public Affairs, Chief, Congressional Support Staff and the Chairman of the Interagency Working Group on Civil Defense.

4. Recommendations:

a. Recommendations of staff elements differ. The Assistant for Public Affairs is not aware of any pressures other than from some members of Congress for a public disclosure on the subject. He and the NIO/USSR and the NIO/SP conclude that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages of releasing the paper at this time. The remainder of the Staff, noting particularly the Congressional interest in an unclassified assessment, are in favor of the release. All members of the staff believe, however, that releasing the paper through a Congressional Committee would be preferable to a direct release by the DCI or to a release of parts of the paper in the Annual Defense Department Report.

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b. On balance, I personally am inclined against release of the memorandum at this time. The Agency is already much too much in the news. If the study should become a major press topic, CIA could be depicted as having a policy purpose in releasing this material just as the defense budget is under consideration and a SALT treaty is in prospect.

c. If your own inclination is to release the study, I agree that you should first consult with the Secretary of State as recommended by Mr. Hetu.

d. Should you decide to release the study, I suggest that, in line with past practice, you advise members of NFIB concerning your intention and invite their comment.

SIGNED

[Redacted Signature Box]

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Attachments

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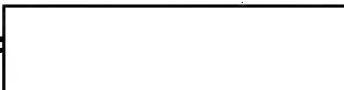
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